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Admission with Reservations (AWR) is a common phenomenon at some US colleges where students with poor academic records are enrolled as an economic necessity of the institution. These students, unable to meet course requirements, usually drop out of college in their first year. The freshman class entering Knox College in Fall 1963 included 24 AWR students who either (1) had an average SAT below 425, (2) had an average SAT below 520 and did not rank in the upper quarter of their high school class, or (3) ranked in the lower half of their high school class. A year later, 50 AWR students in the entering freshman class were referred to certain faculty members for special academic advising, and were offered a different course combination from the one taken by the 1963 group. Sixty-six percent of the 1964 group were in good standing after 2 years, compared to 33% of the 1963 group. Only 4 of the 1964 group have been dropped from the college, compared to 10 of their 1963 counterparts. None of the students in either group earned a B average in any one year, but the 1964 AWR students' chances of academic success were greatly improved. Results of this experiment suggest that admitting marginal students at their own risk and placing them in "special" or "filler" categories usually leads to failure, but that faculty counseling and course patterns that meet individual needs in the first semester of the freshman year can raise academic performance to a satisfactory level. (WM)

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AWR: ADMISSION WITH RESERVATIONS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Office of Institutional Research
Knox College
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HE 000 521

AWR: ADMISSION WITH RESERVATIONS

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The AWR freshmen at Knox College are students identified for experimental purposes as being admitted with reservations as to their ability to compete with the average Knox student. In this paper I shall attempt to clarify the connotation of AWR by reviewing the pro and con of admitting students who can be accepted only with reservations. In the latter part of this paper I shall present the statistical evidence upon which the hope of furthering the education of such students rests. Let me state at the outset that I unequivocally support the propositions that we find ourselves dealing with an increasingly heterogeneous population of students, that we must develop a statistically informed differentiation in the advising of freshmen, and that an established research based selection of the AWR student and his freshman program will be of great benefit to these students and to the college.

The Connotation of AWR

In my total experience at Knox College there has never been a year in which we have not accepted a small percentage of students whose prospects of graduation were dim. Generally these students were admitted late in the game and given to understand that they were coming here at their own risk. Most of them lost the gamble. For a few years we admitted a small number of students in a "special" student category. These students were not permitted to take a full course load, and were not eligible for sports or for "rush". The academic record of these students was so generally inferior as to bring about the cancellation of the category.

The connotation of these marginal students we have accepted in the past is sometimes supplied by the word, "filler". Frequently they were applicants

whom we accepted primarily in order to fill the class.[1] While the "filler" student is commonplace in American private education and is apt to be with us for some little time yet, I regard them as evidence of badly conceived admissions situations. They are a manifestation of over-optimism as to the enrollment demand facing the college.[2] My central objection, however, is not to the fact that we have taken certain students but to the circumstances in which they were taken; to the general connotation of these students as "fillers". I revolt at the idea that for economic considerations we let them take their chances, oblivious to the possibility that, within the bounds of sound academic counseling, we might increase their prospects of graduation.

There are two reasons why the "filler" student is generally accepted only at his own risk. In the first place these students come from relatively wealthy families, and academicians as a rule do not sympathize with them as much as with students from economically deprived families. Why worry about making breaks for the student who cannot take advantage of the breaks with which he was born? There is almost a feeling that these students can afford failure, and that if they are losers, they are not worth worrying about.

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1 Sometimes the marginal student is accepted on the basis of past or present parental association with the college

2 Admittedly, correct estimates of enrollment demand are not easily come by. On balance, optimism in college administration is a virtue, but, in admissions policy, optimism leads (1) to belated additions to scholarship funds which had been better alloted in the first place, (2) to an unnecessarily low enrollment admittance ratio, and (3) to the late acceptance of students who either should have been accepted earlier or should not have been accepted at all.

The second reason why the "filler" student is accepted only at his own risk is much more important. We assume that we cannot help them within the bounds of academic propriety. Any attempt to "nurse" these students is regarded as stooping and as being detrimental to the college posture. Futhermore, there exists the suspicion that any success in "carrying" these students will only lead to more of them being added to the faculty burden. This view sees admission of the"filler" student as an administrative vice, born of economic necessity, which should be fought at every turn. Some faculty even go so far as to maintain that acceptance of these students is an administrative <u>error</u>, a short-run economic decision detrimental in the long-run to society's image of the college.

Whatever the merits of these arguments for so grudgingly an acceptance of these students, much is to be said on the other side.

In opposition to the first reason for accepting a student as a "filler" only at his own risk, I find it strange that the same intellectuals who so decry materialism are the first to consider deprivation only in economic terms. Little consideration is given the fact that young people can be deprived in many ways. There is no such thing as a person who can afford failure; even the drop-out who later achieves financial success through his family's money has missed something. This latter philosophy, carried too far, might of course lead to some undesirable consequences. There is some bit of preacher in all of us which likes to think that every student, some how, some way, can finally be <u>saved</u>. This instinct must be controlled lest the business of education bog down to a salvation of souls.

At some point faculty concern for students can degenerate into sentimentality with the worse possible results. I only object to the opinion that this limit point of faculty concern should be close to zero; to the generalization that special consideration in the academic advising of students only adds to our problems.

I am also in opposition to the second reason for accepting these students only at their own risk. The view that the "filler" student probably cannot, (and in any case should not) be helped through academic advising is associated[3] with a more general degeneration of feeling for faculty responsibility in academic advising. By the fall of 1963 we had moved a very long way in the direction of advising our entering class in rigid patterns. If a student had not satisfied General Education requirements by examination, he tended to be immediately placed in courses which, if passed, would lead to the satisfaction of the requirements. This approach made the proficiency program in General Education a cover charge for promotion into higher education. In concentrating on requirements we tended to lose sight of the individual student, relegating many of them to a completely dull freshman year. While we admitted that our freshman class was

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3 Whether reaction to the "filler" student has caused this degeneration or whether this reaction is a rationalization for poorer academic advising is open to question. The opinion that Ph.D.'s, trained in particular fields, untrained in academic advising, should have no responsibility in the preparation of students' schedules is voiced more frequently today than was the case ten years ago. Dean Mueller has expressed the view that the participation of a faculty person in academic advising is an important part of that person's total involvement with the college. I believe the data presented in the latter part of this paper indicate that the faculty is willing to experiment with academic advising where supported by specific institutional research.

a heterogeneous group, all too frequently we limited the identification of student differences to (1) the scores on proficiency examinations and (2) the amount of work in the area a student had had in high school. One would think that such things as (1) CEEB aptitude scores, (2) rank in high school class, and (3) size and type of high school would have come in for some consideration. These latter variables tended to enter the picture only as they correlated with proficiency scores and work in high school, and no evidence was presented to show that an extensive correlation existed.

Though the profile of the 1963 entering class was significantly superior to the profiles of previous classes, the performance of the class was inferior. Seventeen per cent of the entering freshmen were placed on Unsatisfactory Status after one semester. Clearly we had a problem at hand which could not be traced to mere inadequacy in admissions standards. The poverty of academic performance in this class extended far beyond the reflection of a small number of "filler" students. An explanation was sought in the naivete of the formulas by which we differentiate students for advising purposes.[4] This view submits that we should try to extend our differentiation of students within an entering class; that we should try to identify signals warning us that specific students might not be able to compete as freshmen within our accepted course placement guidelines.

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[4] For an approach to the statistical identification of differentiating variables see the monograph, Some Specific Aspects of the Performance of the 1963-64 Freshman Class at Knox College, August, 1964.

For example: surely forty per cent of the 1963-64 entering class should not have been placed in calculus the first semester. Shouldn't we have reservations about putting some students; e.g.,[5] Paula Mayfield, into calculus? Shouldn't we have some specific reservations about the ability of *many* of our entering students to compete in certain courses, or course combinations, in their beginning year? This approach does not think in terms of "filler" students accepted at their own risk; it thinks in terms of broad categories of students admitted with reservations.[6]

The above argument may of course be accepted as a rational position. The central question still remains: within the bounds of academic propriety can we improve the AUM student's chances of academic success? The indicated answer is, yes. The data presented in the latter part of this paper support the position that, while specific advising cannot turn these students into campus leaders, their chances of graduation can be normalized.

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5 Indianapolis Crispus Attucks High School valedictorian; three years of math in high school; CEEB V 444, M 397.

6 Within this approach one can admit that some of the "filler" students we have accepted in the past should not have been accepted. On the other hand, one should emphasize that more of these students should have succeeded than did succeed. If they needed better academic advising, they were not alone.

Progress Investigation in Advising the 1966-67 Freshman Class

An analysis of the academic performance of the 1963-64 freshman class showed that three categories of students had unsatisfactorily poor records. These were (1) students whose average SAT was below 4.25, (2) students whose average SAT was below 3.00 and who did not rank in the upper quarter of their high school class, and (3) students who ranked in the lower half of their high school class.[3] Table I identifies the twenty-four students who fell in these categories and shows their first semester and first year grade indexes.

Of the students entering, September, 1966, fifty[4] fell into these "high risk" categories. They were distinguished both in their advisors on needing special advising. It was specifically recommended that these students not take Eng 102 or 103, Math 201, Econ 201, Phil 113 or Hol 110.

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[3] It was also clear that students from small high schools (graduating class less than 100) had inferior records, though no specific experimentation was undertaken in the advising of this group. Beginning this year our Data Processing Office will maintain a student Academic Register which will list, by each high school, the students who have come to Knox from that school in the past six years. It will state their class rank, CEEB scores, their first year and cumulative indexes, and their current relationship to the college (current student, withdrew, dropped, graduated, etc.) These data will be of great benefit to high school counselors, to our Admissions Office, and to the development of a more sophisticated designation of AVR students.

[4] Lest the jump from twenty-four to fifty be taken as indicative of a trend increase in the admission of marginal students, it should be pointed out that our implicit hypothesis is that these students are "high risk" only in the absence of special advising. Of the fifty 1966-63 students falling into these categories ten were above average either in class rank or CEEB scores. Others were admitted in spite of a low class rank because they came from very good high schools. One of these students was a valedictorian in a class of 200; another an Illinois State scholar. The identification of many of these students as AVR is more of a tribute to the potential of the average Knox freshman with whom they must compete than it is a slur on the students themselves. No stigma should attach to the designation AVR. It should also be mentioned that our freshman profile improved again last year, potentially accentuating the problems of some students.

It was also emphasized that these students should not be placed in the following course combination: Eng 101, Hist 105 and a 100 level language.[9]

Tables II and III identify the fifty AWR students of the 1964-65 entering class and show their first semester grades. The following information is summarized from Tables I, II, and III.

	1964-65		1963-64
	From Private Schools	From Public Schools	Public and Private Schools
Number of Students.....	20	30	24
Group Grade Index (4 point).....	1.90	1.81	1.37
Per Cent at Least C Average.....	60	43	17
Per Cent Placed on Unsat. Status....	20	50	79

These data indicate that the AWR Prep school students had better first semester records than AWR students from public schools. In the case of both groups, however, it is indicated that the avoidance of certain courses and course combinations will raise the chance of a student's satisfactory performance in the first semester. Even so, the question remains: Are we shepherding these students through their freshman year only to have them drop out as sophomores? The answer is conclusively, no.

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[9] The faculty response to these suggestions, while spotty, was on the whole agreeable. Some students were enrolled in Math 201 with generally poor results. One student was enrolled in the English, History, Language sequence and had the worse academic record of the group. The English Department insisted that it saw no reason to change its established procedures of placement. Nevertheless, the course pattern taken by these fifty students entering in the fall of 1964 was very different from that taken by their counterparts the preceding year.

Tables IV and V show relevant indexes and the current status of the fifty 1964-65 AWR students. Table VI compares the status of these students with their counterparts of 1963-64 two years after entering. The following summary statements are derived from these tables.

1. Sixty-six per cent of the 1964-65 group were in good standing after two years or had withdrawn in good standing.[10] The comparable figure for the 1963-64 group was thirty-three per cent.
2. Seventy-eight per cent of the 1964-65 group are still associated with the college as compared with forty-six per cent for the 1963-64 group at a comparable point in time.[11]
3. Only four of the fifty 1964-65 AWR group have been dropped from the college.[12] Ten of the twenty-four 1963-64 counterparts had been dropped after two years. In the case of both groups, most all of these drop-outs occurred after the freshman year.
4. Of the thirty-nine 1964-65 group who are still in school, twenty-eight had a higher sophomore index than freshman index. Of the remaining eleven students, five have a cumulative index of 2.00 or better.

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10 Five students withdrew in good standing after earning better than a C average their freshman year. Probably Knox was not the first choice of these students.

11 While we cannot predict how many of the 1964-65 group will actually return for their junior year, it is encouraging that only two of the remaining students failed to go through May enrollment. Most of these students cannot transfer without losing substantial credit, and their graduating ratio may indeed be higher than that of their class as a whole.

12 One other student was dropped after the freshman year, but permitted to return on the basis of summer school work. This student currently is in good standing with an upperclass index substantially better than 2.00.

5. Of the seventy-four students in both groups, no student earned as much as a B average in any one year.

In sum, the performance of the 1964-65 AWR group was a dramatic improvement over that of the "high risk" group of 1963-64. Can we, with substantial confidence, attribute the major part of this difference in performance to the difference in academic advising? I think we can. Certainly we cannot attribute the difference to chance. Of course many variables may affect student academic performance: the campus atmosphere, the political and social atmosphere, the breakfast habits of teachers, etc. It admittedly was impossible to measure the influence of such variables in this specific experiment. In the absence of specific observation to the contrary, however, we may suppose that these various influences large-ly cancel out. On this limiting assumption we can say that academic advising is an important variable in the academic performance of the identified groups of students.

INFERENCES AS TO POLICY

May we conclude from the present study that if we extend our differentiation in advising, our Admissions Office will have free license in the acceptance of sub-par students? Certainly not. With the continuing depreciation of the purchasing power of endowment from inflation, the college will be forced to continue to transfer the burden of costs to students. The decision to increase the college's enrollment by approximately 100 students a year has already been accepted by the faculty. With larger entering classes we will almost certainly have larger numbers of students who should be designated AWR. The numbers of such students will increase pari passu any errors in pricing;[13] we are finding it increasingly necessary to know in advance the size of our entering class. If our Admissions Office does accept ever increasing numbers of AWR students over the next several years, it thus will not be for purely humanitarian reasons. We may simply have to take these students.

On the other hand if we do take these students they do show some promise. We can and should help them through differentiation in advising. We help the student as an individual; moreover we help the college as an institution. We should stress the former in acknowledgement of the college's responsibility to its students. On the other hand, consider that of the fifty 1964-65 freshman designated AWR, we might have expected twenty-three

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[13] In the monograph, The Enrollment Demand Facing Knox College, I argue that the maximization of net tuition receipts by the college involves the gradual extension of the scholarship program to the fourth year. This position assumes a constant or improving profile for entering classes.

to return for the sophomore year in the absence of special considerations in advising. Actually, thirty-nine returned. To accomplish the return of thirty-nine such students without differential advising, we would have had to take eighty-five "high risk" students. Whatever one thinks of these students it appears that for every ten of these students we can keep by changing the odds, there are twenty-one whom we will not be forced to take.

TABLE I

RANK IN CLASS, SAT SCORES, FIRST SEMESTER AND FIRST YEAR INDICES FOR TWENTY-FOUR "HIGH RISK" STUDENTS ENTERING KNOX COLLEGE, FALL, 1963

Name of Student	Rank in Class	Verbal SAT	Math SAT	Grade# Index 2-1-64	Grade# Index 6-1-64
	408/808	580	596	.00	.28
	12/35	414	487	.37	.24
	155/456	522	439	.50	.21
	254/610	496	522	.53	.70
	26/38	574	654	1.53	1.79
	230/345	560	672	.47	.22
	4/11	531	500	-.07	.43
	24/37	457	588	-.36	**
	25/92	483	489	.20	.33
	31/42	398	439	.00	.00
	160/589	515	489	.27	.57
	12/29	522	464	-.20	-.22
	151/403	503	530	.50	.41
	9/34	444	505	.19	.14
	105/201	476	513	.53	.39
	23/36	463	621	1.40	1.45
	307/428	713	617	-.40	**
	117/599	395	338	.20	.41
	394/782	450	489	.94	.74
	48/54	528	547	.19	.53
	25/30	535	414	.27	.24
	139/310	504	506	-.23	.23
	175/369	456	527	1.00	1.12
	159/602	470	530	1.00	.84

Source: Reference Table in Some Aspects of the Performance of the Freshman Class at Knox College, August, 1964

** Dropped after one semester.

3 point system

TABLE II

HIGH SCHOOL RANK, CEEB SCORES AND FIRST SEMESTER PERFORMANCE OF TWENTY AWR PREP SCHOOL STUDENTS, ENTERING, SEPTEMBER, 1964

NAME	HIGH SCHOOL RANK	CEEB V	CEEB M	NUMBER OF HOURS OF A	B	C	D	F
	144/165	489	622		3	9	3	
	27/35	489	451			12	4	
	23/29	631	757			13		
	- - -	425	433			4	8	3
	31/39	483	564		3	7		
	34/66	536	597		3	12		
	41/48	611	586		3	8		5
	16/53	440	442		7	4	4	
	61/76	464	514			7	8	
	12/12	637	658		6	7		
	34/56	534	505		8	3	4	
	46/61	662	657		3	7	4	
	59/61	476	478		3	11		
	28/39	472	542			12	3	
	21/81	549	463		7	7		
	29/48	549	432	3	4	3	4	
	12/21	444	478			3	12	
	36/56	551	529		13			
	28/35	502	487			4		11
	15/35	483	541			10	5	
Total				3	63	143	59	19

Source: Office of Institutional Research, February, 1965

Group Index 1.90
(4 point system)

TABLE III

HIGH SCHOOL RANK, CEEB SCORES AND FIRST SEMESTER PERFORMANCE OF THIRTY AWR STUDENTS FROM PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS, ENTERING SEPTEMBER, 1964

NAME	HIGH SCHOOL RANK	CEEB V	CEEB M	NUMBER OF HOURS OF A	B	C	D	F
	12/39	579	415	4	7	4		
	184/370	541	424		7			
	378/999	528	505			10	6	
	435/699	611	649			3	14	
	531/550	631	712			12	4	
	201/370	605	667		3	4	3	5
	321/686	521	496			8	7	
	312/582	579	505		6	8		
	144/305	457	406			7	7	
	117/462	464	364			6	7	
	152/462	406	586		3	3	4	
	185/631	444	541		4	11		
	85/371	288	411		3	6	4	
	4th Qt.	547	505		4	12		
	95/145	605	622		3	13		
	1/200	444	397		3	11		
	364/462	398	455			4	8	
	117/217	549	562		3	8	4	
	308/613	401	558			8	4	4
	78/196	536	497		12	3		
	157/286	530	454			8	6	
	269/370	441	448			9	4	
	126/191	451	460			6	8	
	194/510	425	517			6	8	
	92/323	483	505			7	9	
	280/326	618	523		7	4	3	
	419/930	579	360		4	10		
	127/462	450	480			8	4	2
	183/462	496	442			8	6	
	867/1084	638	625			4	5	5
Total				4	69	218	121	20

Source: Office of Institutional Research, February, 1965

Group Index 1.81
(4 point system)

TABLE IV

FIRST YEAR INDEX, UPPER CLASS INDEX, CUMULATIVE INDEX, AND CURRENT STATUS OF TWENTY AWR PREP SCHOOL STUDENTS ENTERING KNOX COLLEGE SEPTEMBER, 1964

Name	First Year Index	Upper Class Index	Cumulative Index	Status
	1.79	2.50	2.16	In good standing
	1.44	2.31	1.89	In good standing
	2.14	2.00	2.07	In good standing
	2.39	2.48	2.44	In good standing
	1.38	1.96	1.67	In good standing
	2.39	1.71	2.02	In good standing
	1.79	2.72	2.28	In good standing
	2.10	2.20	2.15	In good standing
	2.22	2.24	2.23	In good standing
	1.90	2.50	2.21	In good standing
	2.54	2.20	2.36	In good standing
	2.59	2.88	2.73	In good standing
	2.07	2.48	2.28	In good standing
	1.71	1.69	1.70	Currently on unsat. status
	1.87	1.71	1.79	Currently on unsat. status
	2.04	1.72	1.88	Currently on unsat. status
	2.17			Withdrew in good standing
	2.20			Withdrew in good standing
	1.08			Dropped by college
	.65			Dropped by college

Source: Office of Institutional Research
June, 1966

* Did not enroll for 1st term 1966-67.

TABLE V

FIRST YEAR INDEX, UPPER CLASS INDEX, CUMULATIVE INDEX, AND CURRENT STATUS OF THIRTY AAR STUDENTS FROM PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS ENTERING KNOX COLLEGE, SEPTEMBER, 1964

Name	First Year Index	Upper Class Index	Cumulative Index	Status
	1.63	2.38	2.00	In good standing
	2.00	2.60	2.32	In good standing
	1.60	1.83	1.69	In good standing
	2.31	2.39	2.35	In good standing
	1.58	2.11	1.81	In good standing
	1.63	2.17	1.84	In good standing
	1.48	1.85	1.65	In good standing
	2.40	2.70	2.56	In good standing
	2.03	1.97	2.00	In good standing
	2.32	2.38	2.35	In good standing
	1.59	1.79	1.69	In good standing
	2.55	2.17	2.36	In good standing
	1.96	1.89	1.93	In good standing
	1.60	2.59	2.11	In good standing
	1.50	2.19	1.82	In good standing
	2.62	1.13	1.85	Currently on unsat. status
	1.81	1.48	1.63	Currently on unsat. status
	1.97	1.62	1.79	Currently on unsat. status
	1.55	1.82	1.68	Currently on unsat. status
	1.48	1.88	1.70	Currently on unsat. status
	1.60	1.97	1.78	Currently on unsat. status
	1.93	1.68	1.80	Currently on unsat. status
	1.68	1.71	1.69	Currently on unsat. status
	2.57			Withdrew in good standing
	2.19			Withdrew in good standing
	2.55			Withdrew in good standing
	1.35			Withdrew on unsat. status
	1.33			Withdrew on unsat. status
	1.08			Dropped by college
	1.21			Dropped by college

Source: Office of Institutional Research
June, 1966

* Jackson has been encouraged to seek his education elsewhere because of the high improbability of his ever receiving a Knox degree.

TABLE VI

AWR STUDENTS ENTERING KNOX COLLEGE, FALL, 1963, AND FALL, 1964, CLASSIFIED BY STATUS TWO YEARS AFTER ENTERING

Status	Fall-1964 Number	Fall-1964 Per Cent	Fall-1963 Number	Fall-1963 Per Cent
In good standing	28	56	8	33
On unsatis-factory status	11	22	3	13
Withdrew in good standing	5	10	0	0
Withdrew on unsat-isfactory status	2	4	3	13
Dropped by college	4	8	10	41
Total	50	100	24	100

Source: Office of Institutional Research
June, 1966